

The Show Must Go On

DRAFT

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■Characters

- STAGE MANAGER (She/Her, age 24)
- LEAD DANCER (He/Him, age 23)
- CHARACTER ACTOR (She/Her or They/ Them, age 30)
- SINGER (He/Him or They/ Them, age 25)

■Setting

At a popular theme park

■Time

Present

DRAFT

(The stage is set for a dance performance, decorated with palm trees and colorful lights. We see the set from the performers' perspective. A large stage curtain hangs in the background; behind this curtain is outdoor and the audience, not visible to us. There is a PA system that the STAGE MANAGER uses to broadcast to the entire stage and dressing rooms. A phone is attached to the wall.)

STAGE MANAGER

(Using the PA system.) 10 minutes to curtain, 10 minutes to curtain. Our next show starts at 2:30.

LEAD DANCER

Wait a sec! This is awful! No way, no way! Did you see the thermometer? It says 100 degrees. It's not supposed to get that high up here. I am the LEAD DANCER in this theme park, and I demand you cancel the show. Babe, please, cancel it!

STAGE MANAGER

Don't call me "babe". We can't cancel the show. There's no rain. There's no typhoon. How am I supposed to explain why we're canceling?

LEAD DANCER

We've been doing five shows, five days a week in this inferno. We're all totally exhausted. And now, we've hit the highest temperature ever recorded here. It's too dangerous.

STAGE MANAGER

You were getting sloshed all night. That's way more dangerous than a heat wave.

(The CHARACTER ACTOR appears in a squirrel costume, holding the squirrel costume head in her arms.)

CHARACTER ACTOR

Uh, excuse me, but do I really have to dance in this heat? Dancing in this fur in summer is suicidal. And I've gotta put on the squirrel's head, too. I'm gonna suffocate.

STAGE MANAGER

I'm sorry, Ms. Ricky.

Unfortunately, temperature isn't a legitimate reason to cancel the show in our park. Our guests paid good money to come here today, regardless of the heat. We can't cancel on them.

SINGER

(The SINGER appears, and he makes a thumbs down gesture.)
Are you trying to burn my throat? I'm calling my agent.

STAGE MANAGER

(Sighs.) Feel free.

(To the LEAD DANCER.) You know, it's not his agent, but his boyfriend.

CHARACTER ACTOR

I can't do this. Ricky the Squirrel is the breakout star of this park. He's gotta be at the top of his game. When it's so hot like this, my eyes fog up and I can't get into the groove. Ricky's fans are going to be so disappointed.

LEAD DANCER

If we get heat stroke or injured, we may never be able to dance again. Then, how would you feel?

(STAGE MANAGER glares at LEAD DANCER.)

STAGE MANAGER

Please remember your opening show: the thunderous applause, the audience's eyes, enraptured. And that feeling of accomplishment! Don't you remember? You said you wanted to give every performance your all.

SINGER

(Holding his cell phone.) Hey, he says you should change the cancellation policy due to climate change.

STAGE MANAGER

Who is "he"?

SINGER

My agent.

STAGE MANAGER

(With a sarcastic tone.) Please thank your agent for that helpful feedback.

(To all performers) I know it's rough doing five shows a day, five days a week, for the whole year. I'm sure you'd love a reason to cancel.

But for our guests, it's always a special occasion. It's their one chance to see the show.

(Pause.) We have to get ready to go on.

SINGER

Hah! Anyone who'd come to our show in this heat is a super fan. They probably see us over 100 times a year, so it's meaningless if we cancel one show.

CHARACTER ACTOR

I don't want Ricky the Squirrel to make any mistakes. Did you see the video on YouTube?

I had all that confetti stuck in my hair, and I looked totally stupid! The clip got over 300,000 views in one day. Ricky always has to look his best. Ricky has to inspire kids.

LEAD DANCER

That's right. We should only perform if we're going to look good doing it.

(The STAGE MANAGER looks at the audience seats from behind the curtain.)

STAGE MANAGER

Check it out, the seats are packed.

(Pause.) Wait, he looks familiar. Yeah, that's JY Park, the famous K-Pop producer!

(LEAD DANCER, CHARACTER ACTOR, and SINGER run to see the seat.)

SINGER

(He briefly does some singing exercises.) Really? Is he here to see me?

LEAD DANCER

(He starts stretching his arms and neck.)

He must be here to scout the next superstar dancer.

CHARACTER ACTOR

Oh my gosh. This can't be real. I love his reality shows... and he loves Ricky!? Where? Where is he sitting?

STAGE MANAGER

Oops, that's not him. Sorry, my mistake.

3 performers

What?

STAGE MANAGER

Aha! You guys want to do the show if JY Park is there. Suddenly the heat is irrelevant? You can perform today!

(Using the PA system.) 5 minutes to curtain, 5 minutes to curtain. Please take your positions and stand by.

(CHARACTER ACTOR and SINGER, dejected, retreat to their dressing room.)

LEAD DANCER

(To *STAGE MANAGER*.) I don't know who you are anymore.

(*LEAD DANCER* leaves. The phone on the wall starts ringing. *STAGE MANAGER* picks it up.)

STAGE MANAGER

(On the phone.) The show's starting soon, call back later.
(Pause.) Excuse me? (Pause.) Oh no. How should I handle this?
(Pause.) Wait, what about tomorrow's show? (Pause.) But it's...
(Pause.) Right. I know. Okay, I'll wait to hear back from you.

(*STAGE MANAGER* hangs up the phone. *LEAD DANCER* appears.)

LEAD DANCER

The dancers are throwing a fit. You should say sorry to them after the show.

(Suddenly, we hear an ambulance siren.)

(Pause.) What's wrong?

(*STAGE MANAGER* grabs a microphone which connects the outside speaker.)

STAGE MANAGER

(Through the microphone.) Hello Everyone, I'm sorry to inform you that the show is canceled due to an emergency problem. The show is canceled due to an emergency problem. Thank you for your understanding.

LEAD DANCER

What happened?

STAGE MANAGER

A kid in the audience passed out from heat stroke. An ambulance is coming for him.

(CHARACTER ACTOR *peeks through the curtain to look at the audience.*)

CHARACTER ACTOR

It's Akira's seat.

LEAD DANCER

Akira?

CHARACTER ACTOR

Every Saturday, he comes to give Ricky a high five. He always sits in the same seat, with his mom. He passed out because you tried to do a show in this insane heat!

(SINGER *appears.*)

SINGER

If we perform, we'll end up in the ER. My agent would sue you to high heaven.

LEAD DANCER

Blaming her isn't going to change anything.

STAGE MANAGER

No, they're right. It's my fault. My bad judgment put you all in danger.

(*Silence.*)

LEAD DANCER

The past is past. Let's start fresh tomorrow. Plus, it's supposed to be nice and cloudy.

STAGE MANAGER

Starting tomorrow, all shows are canceled.

LEAD DANCER, CHARACTER ACTOR, AND SINGER

What?

STAGE MANAGER

We put our guests in danger. We can't resume the shows until our company finds a way to do them safely. Who knows, if the weather keeps getting hot like this, outdoor performances may become impossible.

SINGER

What about my payments after tomorrow?

STAGE MANAGER

You'll get your performance fee for your whole time in your contract. I'll reach out to your real agent.

CHARACTER ACTOR

What about Akira? Is he okay?

STAGE MANAGER

He's not in critical condition. I don't know anything else.

CHARACTER ACTOR

If the show is canceled, Ricky will never make children happy again.

STAGE MANAGER

Well, for now we have to prioritize safety.

CHARACTER ACTOR

Why are you always changing your opinions? Sometimes you force us to perform, sometimes you cancel. You know what, I get it. For you, Ricky is just a product! You don't know how I and Ricky devote our lives to performing on this stage!

(CHARACTER ACTOR leaves.)

SINGER

Don't forget about paying me.

(SINGER leaves. STAGE MANAGER sighs.)

LEAD DANCER

Are you okay? (Pause.) Don't take it personally. We artists are emotional creatures.

STAGE MANAGER

Tell the other dancers to stay in their dressing rooms. I'll be there soon.

(LEAD DANCER leaves. STAGE MANAGER looks at the audience from behind the curtain.)

STAGE MANAGER

That's true, I'm just a STAGE MANAGER. I can't get on the same level.